

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, January 21, 2015
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

Members Present: Ed Bonilla, Jessica Stewart, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berlind, Amy Waterman, Beverly Lawrence, Kitty Robinson, Donna Marino, Izzi Greenberg, Susan Sienkiewicz, Marla Hinz, Jim Gaudreau and Christine O'Grady. **Also present:** Cindy Guerreri.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Ed Bonilla called the meeting to order at 12:14 P.M. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Donna announced informational sessions will be offered this evening and tomorrow evening for the Parent SEE Program (Parents Supporting Educational Excellence) and reminded the Council this program will start soon. Ed announced at next week's United Way Annual Meeting Chris Fahey will be announced as the recipient of one of their community awards. She is out of state presently, and will be honored at the upcoming Campaign Awards Breakfast.

III. Acceptance of the December 14, 2014 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Wendy Berlind moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date with the correction on the spelling of Monica Belyea's last name. Amy Waterman seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Action Item: Middletown School Readiness By-Laws: Ed asked the Council for any questions around the by-laws Jessica forwarded to members for their review. A brief discussion followed. A motion was made by Wendy Berlind to accept the by-laws as outlined. The motion was seconded by Donna Marino and passed unanimously with thanks to Jessica for her work developing them.

V. Financial and Monthly Summary Reports: Jessica distributed the financial report, showing 7 vacancies in December and 5 currently. She informed the Council there are 21 families struggling with transportation issues and 36 families that did not enroll due to transportation issues. Along with transportation, age eligibility is also an issue state wide. Jessica suggested we set up a transportation sub-committee to look into this barrier to child care for families. Jim Gaudreau, Donna Marino, Amy Waterman, Izzi Greenberg, Sheila Daniels, Ed Bonilla, Beverly Lawrence and Jessica Stewart volunteered to sit on the committee. Jessica will email all Council members and request for other volunteers as many members were absent from the meeting. Ed suggested the subcommittee research the transportation issues around bussing gaps prior to approaching the MAT management. A brief discussion around bussing for Farm Hill families ensued.

V. Coordinator's Report: School Readiness Slot Capacity Report: Jessica noted she prepared the report and submitted it to the OEC on January 9, 2015. At the time of submission there were 3 full day and 2 school day openings. As of today's meeting only 2 school day slots remain.

Teacher Registry Update: The Office of Early Childhood (O.E.C.) is enforcing and monitoring this database. Programs are required to update staff qualifications and there must be a qualified staff member in every classroom. By June they will withhold funds from programs that are not compliant.

School Readiness Monitoring Update: Jessica is focusing on checking the above mentioned state registry and assisting programs in the process. She noted this is a work in progress. The School Readiness Grant 2 year cycle RFP is expected to be out by February 11th and programs will be told not to file an application if the staff qualifications will not comply by the June 30th deadline. To that end, Bright & Early has 6 staff members that at first review appear to not be able to meet the deadline. Jessica will update the Council at the February meeting on the status of this issue for Bright & Early as she has a monitoring visit scheduled for January 29th to work with Kara on meeting the credentials. A lengthy discussion followed. Liz Fraser mentioned a new bill being proposed to grandfather staff holding an Associate's degree with 10 years or more of work experience at the same child care program. Jessica noted Bright & Early Director Kara Smith is making an effort to remedy the issue. Town & Country also has 1 employee who has a similar issue and she is working on this with Judi Kenney. She noted the system is also flawed and the O.E.C. is aware of data problems, but regardless of these issues, programs need to have this information ready and available for Jessica's review. Izzi Greenberg suggested there might be a systems management issue and asked if a college advisor, someone statewide or locally could help staff walk through the college and course requirements. CT Charts-A-Course does have the outlined information and the O.E.C. has it, too, but it appears there is a communication problem. Certifications are also changing. The State wants institutions to be NAEYC accredited for standardization. Once that is done, the institution must apply to the state for ETTC approval. If communities push back there may be a change. The Early Childhood Network is pushing for grandfathering staff holding an Associate's degree plus 12 early childhood credits. Further discussion around qualifications and worthy wage took place. The Council will revisit this topic in February and Jessica will share more information at that time.

NAEYC Reaccreditation Update: Bright & Early received notification that their visit will take place Jan 22nd and 23rd. Even Start at the Middletown Adult Education Program and the YMCA were also notified of their respective visit windows for their re-accreditation visits.

ACES EHS Update: In Alice's absence, Jessica reported ACES will soon be advertising for a Parent Committee Liaison-Bilingual.

FRC Update: Amy reported "Circle of Security" training will begin next week and "Raising Readers" will follow at a later time at Macdonough. The Kindergarten Kick Start program planning is under way for the summer offerings of this program. They are facing an obstacle with Macdonough being closed this summer and are looking at site options. They are considering housing both the Macdonough and Farm Hill programs at Farm Hill with bussing provided. This is not the most ideal, but still worth offering. Council members suggested Amy look into other sites including: CRT, the Green St. Arts Center, St. John's School, and Faith Lutheran Church. Amy will look into these sites and follow up with CRT Director Marla Hinz on their site as a possible venue. FRC playgroups are ongoing and Amy is looking for more family participation in the FRC offerings. They are also working on home visiting.

CRT Update: Marla noted the Middletown Head Start site still has openings and transportation is an issue for her program, too. She noted transportation also poses obstacles for children currently enrolled and for potential families and impacts attendance of those children enrolled in the program. She is working on staff credentials and will soon be interviewing for a family

service worker. Learning about Bright & Early's staffing issue; Marla noted she is happy to suggest staff applicants apply at Bright & Early because CRT is fully staffed at this time. She is open to suggestions for increasing enrollment.

Child First Update: Christine noted the program is going strong and there are 12 families on their waiting list. Liz noted that Child First presented at the 2 generational learning conference yesterday.

Discovery Update: Cindy noted the Funding Partnership meeting will be forthcoming and the new funding focus for Discovery work will be announced thereafter. She reiterated funding extensions will occur through this calendar year and into the next year so communities will not be defunded abruptly. She went on to say the funding challenge for Middletown will be to fill the gap moving forward if our initiatives do not align with the Memorial Fund's next initiative focus. A brief discussion around this topic followed.

Opportunity Knocks Update: In Monica's absence, Jessica noted the next Opportunity Knocks meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday, Jan. 27th.

Middlesex Coalition Update: Izzi noted the Coalition Planning Committee will be meeting after this meeting to work on plans for the upcoming annual Legislative Breakfast. The Family Support Committee meeting, following next Tuesday's Opportunity Knocks meeting, will discuss how schools interface with homeless children and families. Middletown Board of Education homelessness liaison Ann Perzan will be in attendance for this discussion. This is also part of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Element 3 workgroup. On Monday, January 26th, the Hunger Task Force will meet to discuss increase in free & reduced lunch rates and the summer lunch program. The Coalition was selected by the Wesleyan University service learning class for one of their data projects. The data will focus on food insecurity. Izzi is hoping the data collection can be expanded to include Old Saybrook, Portland and Clinton.

Even Start Update: There was no update as Lina was not in attendance.

Family School Connection: This new update provided by Donna Marino will keep the Council informed on this initiative at Bielefield and Snow School. The program staffs a social worker and 3 home visitors that focus on school connections and is funded through the O.E.C. part of Children's Trust Fund. It serves ages birth and up in its efforts to help families connect to school. Donna noted there is some overlap with Child First. Anyone with questions may contact Donna. She shared the flyer for providers and noted Bielefield has done great work with this initiative.

VI. Adjournment: Ed closed the meeting at 1:36 P.M. thanking those present for their attendance.

**The next Middletown School Readiness Council meeting will be held on
Wednesday, February 18, 2014
at
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St., Middletown, CT 06457
from
12:00 P.M. to 1:30 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted by: Sheila C. Daniels